

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, June 1, 2012

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From the U.S. Department of Education:

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11. National Science Foundation seeks nominees for [President's Award](#)

Attachments to this field memo:

Draft – ESEA Waiver Presentation 6-1-12
House Finance FY 2013 Education Aid 5-31-12

Action Item Calendar

Today (June 1): [Educator Talent Pool](#) packets submission deadline
Today (June 1): [District Teacher of the Year](#) application deadline

Tuesday (June 5): Deadline for teachers to [sign off on TCS data](#)
June 8: Data collection for [PARCC Technology Readiness](#) Tool due
June 13: Preliminary [reports on Early Intervention Services](#) due
June 13: Deadline for [homeless-education data](#) filing
June 15: Deadline for forming [School Data Leadership Teams](#)
June 22: Deadline for principals to [sign off on TCS data](#)
June 29: Final reports on [Early Intervention Services](#) due
June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)
July 15: Deadline for final reporting of [evaluation ratings](#)
July 15: Deadline for submitting school-construction forms (see below)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. U.S. Department of Education approves Rhode Island request for flexibility under NCLB, new accountability system

We were very pleased to be one of eight states to receive approval from the U.S. Department of Education on our request for flexibility under the No Child Left Behind Act. As a result of this approval, we can now proceed to implement a new system for classification of schools and for providing support to schools with low achievement levels, minimal progress, or significant achievement gaps. The new accountability system, which we designed over the past six months with input from the education field and from the public, will enable RIDE to:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- diagnose school performance by identifying specific shortcomings and achievements at each school;
- provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement; and
- provide these schools with the ability to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

As you know, our current accountability system sets the same annual target for each school, regardless of its current level of achievement, and proscribes the same set of initiatives for all schools that miss annual targets.

Under the new system, we will classify schools based on:

- **Proficiency:** How many students have attained proficiency or better?
- **Distinction:** How many students have attained distinction?
- **Gap-closing:** Is the school serving all students, including those with disabilities and English Learners?
- **Progress:** Is the school approaching its 2017 targets?
- **Growth (K-8):** Are all students making progress?

- **Improvement** (high schools): Is the school improving annually?
- **Graduation** (high schools): Are all students ready for success?

After classifying schools using these measures, we will identify schools in need of support and intervention and will diagnose the needs of each identified school. Each school that we identify will develop a multi-year intervention plan, which RIDE will monitor. The plans will include numerous reform strategies – in the areas of leadership, support, infrastructure, and content – that will be targeted to address the specific needs of each identified school. We will also use the classification system to commend schools that have attained high achievement levels or that are making dramatic progress.

We have developed a [Fact Sheet](#) on our new accountability system, and I have attached to this Field Memo a draft (still a work in progress; comments welcome) of a PowerPoint that we have developed explaining the highlights of the classification and accountability system.

Over the next several weeks, we will complete our 2012 School Classifications, and I will send you the data and classifications regarding your LEA for your review. Please be assured that I will communicate with you directly on this matter, so you will not be surprised by a public announcement before you have had a chance to review information about the classification of your schools. I will reach out specifically to each LEA that has schools in classifications that entail intervention: Warning School, Focus Schools, and Priority Schools, and I will continue to keep you informed about the timeline for development and release of classifications as we move forward with this process.

To help ensure that you understand how we have used data to classify your schools, we have scheduled a webinar for Wednesday, **June 13**, and a meeting on Friday, **June 15**, to discuss our accountability and classification system. I will send you details about the webinar and the meeting in next week's Field Memo.

I am confident that our new accountability system will help us accelerate all Rhode Island schools toward greatness.

2. House Finance approves budget that supports aid to education, technology investments

All of us in the education field should be pleased that the budget that the Finance Committee approved yesterday (Thursday) retains Governor Chafee's proposal to fully fund the Funding Formula for aid to education and to accelerate the payments to districts that are currently underfunded. I applaud this commitment to public education and to economic relief for our cities and towns.

I am also pleased that the budget includes the \$20-million technology bond, which will bring Internet wireless access and expanded bandwidth to every Rhode Island classroom. Wireless access is essential so that our schools are to engage in innovations powered by technology and so that our students can have access to the many opportunities available through digital learning.

The budget also retains Governor Chafee's recommendations for:

- \$3 million to support career and technical education;
- \$1.4 million for early-childhood education (which will fund the ongoing PreK Pilot Program);
- An increase of \$1 million for to help school districts meet high-cost special-education commitments.

At present, we are reviewing the provision within the budget to create a single Board of Education and to create a new position of Chancellor of Education, with oversight of the entire system of public education in Rhode Island.

Our Finance Office has prepared a more detailed budget analysis, which is a Field Memo item [below](#).

From RIDE:

3. Interim Order Decision posted regarding Woonsocket

Our Legal Office has posted these decisions regarding the Woonsocket Public Schools:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2012/008-12_Sargent_Rehab._Ctr._v_Woonsocket_P._S._and_RIDE_052412.pdf

and

http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2012/009-12%20_Student_S._Doe_v._Woonsocket_S.C._060112.pdf

4. LEAs can serve meals in afterschool programs in low-income areas; RIDE to hold informational sessions June 26

Please see this notice from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies:

The at-risk afterschool meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offers federal funding to qualified afterschool programs operating in a low-income area that serve a meal (supper) to children and youth (up to age 18 years). Recent changes now allow school food authorities currently participating in the National School Lunch Program to also serve afterschool meals as a sponsor of the CACFP. Two weeks ago, all LEAs with eligible schools were sent an informational flyer regarding the program. Two informational sessions for school-district personnel are being held on Tuesday, June 26, at RIDE. Any school department interested in finding out more about the program for the start of the new school year should contact Kathy A. Kendall, MS, RD, LDN, at 222-8935. Here are links to the flyer and to the registration form, which you can complete and return if you would like to attend one of the sessions:

http://www.esnacs.ride.ri.gov/esnacs/asp/Documents_Manager/At-risk_flyer_for_schools_1133.doc

http://www.esnacs.ride.ri.gov/esnacs/asp/Documents_Manager/INFORMATIONAL_SESSION_flyer_1132.doc

5. Strengthening Performance-Based Graduation Institute applications due June 21

Please see this message from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

RIDE is now accepting applications for the participation in the first cohort of the Strengthening Performance-Based Graduation (SPBG) Institute. Selected schools will be provided with significant professional development and they will be included in a highly successful professional learning community to develop local common performance assessments. This opportunity is being made possible through funding by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Rhode Island Foundation.

This project will provide secondary-school teams with training in the processes of assessment writing, validation, scoring, and evaluation of the process. Please read the application for details about team requirements and commitments.

The application is available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/default.aspx> .

Applications are due electronically by **June 21** at 5:00 p.m. to Stacy Mello, at: Stacy.Mello@ride.ri.gov.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Rosemary Burns, at: Rosemary.Burns@ride.ri.gov.

6. RIDE posts new guidebooks for Edition II of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation and Support System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

New guidebooks for Edition II of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation and Support System are now available as PDF documents on the RIDE website. Two distinct guidebooks have been developed, one for the teacher model and a second for the building-administrator model. In addition to the electronic versions, RIDE will deliver hard copies of both guidebooks to participating LEAs over the next few weeks.

We are thrilled to share these new resources with the field and would like to thank all of the Rhode Island educators who helped shape both the revised model and the new guidebooks. Just as we wanted to improve the Rhode Island Model before full implementation, our goal was to create improved guidebooks and resources as well. We hope you find the new guidebooks clearer, and easier to use.

To download the new guidebooks, please visit our educator-evaluation page at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Guides.aspx>

7. RIDE to provide additional information about the new Professional Practice Rubric for educator evaluations

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

One of the biggest differences between Editions I and II of the Rhode Island Model Teacher Evaluation and Support System is the new Professional Practice Rubric. The new Professional Practice rubric was adapted from the 2011 version of Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. Transitioning to the Danielson rubric will help us offer stronger support resources, including a robust on-line training video library, which will lead to more transparent, fair, and accurate ratings that teachers and school leaders can use to help improve teaching and learning. In next week's field memo, we will provide further information about this change, including a crosswalk between Edition I and Edition II Teacher Professional Practice Rubric.

8. RIDE provides details on education funding in House Finance budget

Please see the following message from our Office of Finance:

Yesterday (May 31), the House Finance Committee approved its Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 budget. Attached to this field memo are the FY 2013 education aid figures. The House Finance Committee budget supports most of the Governor's recommendations and increases overall state education funds by \$72.4 million, to \$935.2 million (\$32.3 million of this increase is a restoration of a FY 2012 general-revenue reduction related to the federal education-jobs funds).

Please note that this budget must be enacted by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor and is subject to change.

Here are highlights on some of the key topics in the budget:

Education Aid

The House Finance budget supports the Governor's recommendations to:

- provide \$33.1 million to fund Year 2 of the funding formula, which includes \$11 million, or 50 percent more, for underfunded districts than is required under the current transition plan;
- provide \$5.6 million for the funding formula categorical funds, including \$3 million to support career-and-technical education; \$1.4 million for early-childhood programs; \$500,000 for the high-cost special education fund; and \$1.1 million for the second year of the transportation categorical fund. Increased funding is offset by a \$400,000 reduction to the regional bonus, which is scheduled to decrease from 2 percent to 1 percent. In addition to the

high-cost special education fund, the House Finance budget also provides \$500,000 to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to support the costs for students with disabilities under the custody of DCYF. This budget also supports the Governor's recommendation to repeal the Perkins School for the Blind law (RIGL 16-25), which is inconsistent with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the RI Vision Education and Services Program (RIGL 16-26.1); and

- reduce education aid by \$420,000, for group-home aid data updates required by RIGL 16-64-1.1. Group-home aid is updated annually based on actual licensed beds reported on December 31. Five districts were affected by a decrease in the number of DCYF licensed beds.

The House Finance budget *does not* include the following Governor's recommended reductions, and it restores the related state funding:

- \$500,000 for the supplemental Education Jobs Fund allocation awarded in Fall 2011;
- \$270,000 for the school-breakfast subsidy; and
- \$240,000 for nonpublic-school textbook funding

Technology

The House Finance budget includes the \$20-million bond to provide wireless access for our schools, which will support our public schools in their efforts to achieve the bold educational reform initiatives outlined in our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*. The telecommunication-bandwidth expansion will be supported by principal payments for this bond, which will also support the state match for this program; therefore, the House Finance budget does not include the Governor's recommendation to expand the phone surcharge to wireless phones.

Model Budget and Financial Oversight

The House Finance budget supports the Governor's recommendation to require all school districts, regional school districts, state-operated schools, and charter public schools to implement a Regents-approved budget model and to utilize best practices established by RIDE for long-range planning, budget development, budget administration, and reporting. In addition, this budget requires RIDE to conduct periodic reviews and analysis of school revenues and expenses and to identify those local education agencies considered to be at risk of a year-end deficit or structural deficit that could impact future years.

Maintenance of Effort

This budget revises the maintenance-of-effort laws as follows:

Municipalities may appropriate supplemental funds to eliminate or reduce a school-budget deficit. To the extent the supplemental appropriation represents payment of past annual expenditures, the payment shall not be used in the computation of the maintenance-of-effort requirements. In addition, debt service that is no longer carried on the books of any school district shall not be included in any school district's annual

budget, nor shall non-recurring debt service be included in the maintenance-of-effort calculation. Non-recurring lease payments shall be considered non-recurring debt service.

School Construction Aid

The House Finance Committee supports the Governor's recommendation to freeze the minimum state share for school-construction aid at 35 percent; however, the language was amended to exclude projects approved prior to June 30, 2012 that will still be eligible for the 40 percent minimum. The House Finance Committee did not accept the Governor's recommendation to amend the way that charter public schools get reimbursed for school-construction aid. The recommendation would have changed the reimbursement to a weighted average, based on the rates of the communities of residence of their students. Charter school-construction aid will remain at a flat 30 percent.

Other

The House Finance budget amends the payment schedule for education and school-construction aid to spread the payments more evenly throughout the year and to expedite municipalities' ability to access to aid. The July education-aid payment will be 2.54 percent of the total, while the remaining eleven monthly payments will be 8.86 percent of total aid. East Providence will continue to receive its education aid in two installments, in October and April, in accordance with chapter 344 of the Public Laws of 1982. School-construction aid payments will be moved up to September 15 and March 15 from October 31 and April 30. Therefore, in order to ensure the calculations are completed in time to accommodate this change, it is very important that the school-construction forms be submitted by the **July 15** deadline.

The House Finance Committee recommends that the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP) receive state funding directly through the funding formula; however, this change will not take effect until July 1, 2013 (FY 2014). State funding for students from Central Falls, Cranston, and Providence will go directly to UCAP while the current local tuition paid by the applicable communities will be transitioned down to the local share calculated pursuant to RIGL 16-7.2-5 over the remaining years of the formula transition.

If you have any questions, please contact Kristen Cole, at 222-4681 or Kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov.

9. RIDE begins implementing new Single Sign-On user accounts for all certified educators

Please see this notice from our Office of Network and Information Systems:

In order to minimize the impact on the LEAs of creating new Single Sign-On user accounts for their certified staff, RIDE will be migrating account information from the existing RICERT system. Prior to the migration process, it is critical that we have valid e-mail addresses for the purpose of notifying all the educators in the state about the new Single Sign-On system and the change to the log-in process. RIDE will soon be launching

a web-based e-mail-address verification process that will ask the user to provide two e-mail addresses – one for work-related notification and one for non-work-related notification. So that you are informed as to how we will be reaching out to your teachers, we have included in this notice our process and timeline that will ensure that we are able to contact the maximum number of educators in the state.

Upcoming timelines:

Beginning today, June 1 and through Tuesday (June 5), RIDE will e-mail to educators information about the new Single Sign-On Portal, with a link to the E-mail Validation application.

From Today through August 1, RIDE will open the E-mail Validation application that we will use to validate educators' e-mail addresses. Each educator will be asked to verify or provide two e-mail addresses. Each educator will identify one for work-related notification and one for non-work-related notification, such as certification notifications.

We will send a letter in the postal mail to any educator who does not validate by July 1. The content in the letter will be the same as the original e-mail. We will use the home address on file in our certification database.

In mid-August, we will send an e-mail to all the educators who have validated their e-mail address. This e-mail will notify them of their new Single Sign-On (SSO) ID and temporary password.

In mid-August, we will also be conducting training for the designated SSO Administrator in each LEA. This will teach the administrators how to use the Single Sign-On system to add, create, and remove accounts and to assign access to the applications available through the SSO portal.

Please contact Ed Giroux, at ed.giroux@ride.ri.gov, with any questions.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

10. Providence among districts selected to participate in U.S. Department of Education FAFSA project

The U.S. Department of Education announced Wednesday (May 30) that 92 additional school districts will now have access to individualized data to help their students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Providence is one of the districts selected.

The Department writes:

Completing the FAFSA—which is used to determine eligibility for federal aid and is the gateway to other student aid—is a critical factor in helping students access higher education.

Selected school districts, which span 30 states, will be able to track whether high school seniors have completed the FAFSA starting in the 2012-13 school year. This information

will help school college guidance counselors focus efforts and resources on students who have not yet completed the process. These 92 new sites join 18 other districts that received data for the 2011-12 school year as part of the FAFSA Completion Project's initial pilot. Since the project launched, the Department has received requests from districts and high schools to expand the pilot.

"If students don't think they can pay for college, they won't apply for college. Giving more young people access to the tools they need to apply for federal student aid is a key part of our strategy to make America number one in the world for college graduates by 2020," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Our hope is that this will help dramatically boost the number of high-schoolers going on to college. That's good for the economy, good for the kids, and good for the country."

To evaluate the effectiveness of local level counseling, districts with multiple high schools will have a staggered roll out. The districts will establish an experimental group and a control group by giving half of participating schools access to the FAFSA data in year one of the project, then adding the remaining half of schools the following year. The Department's Institute of Education Statistics will publish a report that summarizes the findings of the 80 multi-high school districts.

Simplifying the FAFSA to make it shorter and more user-friendly has been a key part of the Administration's efforts to increase access to college. The FAFSA determines whether a student qualifies for Pell grants as well as other federal grants, loans and work-study opportunities and helps families figure out how to afford higher education.

11. National Science Foundation seeks nominees for President's Award

Please see this message from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

Do you know someone who has been a role model and mentor to others within the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines? If so, please consider nominating them for the President's Award for Excellence in STEM Mentoring, which recognizes outstanding mentoring efforts that enhance the participation and retention of students and early-career investigators, with a special emphasis on those who might not otherwise have considered or had access to opportunities in STEM fields. Nominations, including self-nominations, will be accepted until June 6. For more information, see:

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5473.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>